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Hence, also, the form of a dispensation may be changed and yet the revelation remain. The former may not only be fulfilled while the latter abides, but the passing away of the dispensation may become the confirmation of the revelation. Besides, a dispensation may be changed in form and yet remain in substance. The Old and New Testaments contain two forms of the same covenant of grace. Consequently, changes which affected the form of the dispensation, did not affect the substance of the revelation. The New Testament is not an absolutely new revelation, but another and higher form of the old revelation. Modern errors regarding the Old Testament arise in a great measure from confounding the revelation with the dispensation and then reasoning from the abolition of the one to the abrogation of the other. But in connection with the permanence of the revelation it must be remembered that not only is the moral law or decalogue permanent as the rule of life, but also that the ceremonial law of Leviticus is profitable for doctrine or instruction in the faith.

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## THE VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR THE WORK OF THE PASTOR.

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### III.

4. A fourth kind of truth peculiar to the Old Testament, may be termed illustrative, or evidential, truth. It stands in the Old Testament as the truth of fact and experience, but forms the basis whence we may pass, by sure induction, to the truth of religious dogma. It is then at once the illustration of the method in which God deals with men, and the proof of what that method really is. It comprises the whole Old Testament history of redemption in so far as that history shows us God dealing with the life of this world, and treating men according to their needs and deserts. It is, therefore, all that truth contained in the Old Testament, which is historical and individual in form, but religious and general in meaning.

Of this nature, is almost the entire Old Testament, both in its history, its poetry, and its prophecy. Then the Old Testament is the great divine book of object lessons, given for the childhood of the race. But it is not without an important and indispensable value in these later times. For each individual, in all ages, must more or less repeat, in his

own experience and thinking, the childhood of the race. The road from no knowledge to the best that man now has, is, indeed, more quickly travelled by the individual, than it has been by the race; for other men have labored, and we enter into their labors. But the road itself is, after all, substantially the same. The entomologist shows us that the embryo repeats, in its development, the life-history of its kind. Somewhat like this, is the development of the individual soul, only that, since the onward movement in the soul's growth is not determined by laws so external and mechanical as those that govern the life of the body, many a soul never passes much beyond its childhood.

All this makes the Old Testament a book of the greatest practical value to the pastor who knows how to use it. For such a teacher of the church, it becomes a kind of "Vade mecum." It enables him to "preach life" to living men, but life that flows from the only source from which any good and full life can flow,—sound doctrine.

This results from an important difference which there is between the Old Testament and the New. The New Testament is the book of abstract statement, the Old Testament the book of concrete fact. The New Testament teaches us for the most part, by general and abstract truths, how God now deals with the souls of men, and what will be, in the future, the sure results of the different forms of human conduct. In the Old Testament, we see God, in numerous actual instances, and in varied ways, dealing with living men, and visiting human conduct with its proper and divinely ordained consequences.

Now God is the Unchangeable One, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He is unchanged and unchangeable both in his own nature, and in the fundamental principles and laws of his moral government. His relations to men, in all moral and spiritual matters, are ever the same. On the other hand, the fundamental moral and religious needs and possibilities of men are the same in all ages and in all countries. Consequently, what God can do, and will do, for men; what he wishes to do, and what he must do, with them; and not less what men can do, and must do, for God; and what they may do with him, all remain eternally the same. God, then, dealt with the bodies and souls of men, and with their conduct, in his personal and immediate presence in Israel, in the Old Testament age, according to the same principles and laws, and with the employment of fundamentally the same methods, as now, and will forever, determine his dealings with men, and his treatment of their conduct.

From all this, it follows that, in the Old Testament, we may study both God and man by an "inductive method." We may learn what

God is, and what he will do for and with men, by seeing what he was, and what he did, in the days of patriarchs and prophets. We may discover what fate will attend the various forms of human conduct, by seeing to what they led in that olden time. We may know what are the possibilities of human endeavor, and what men, by the grace of God, may do and be, by learning what the ancient men of God, of whom the world was not worthy, became and achieved. We may discover what are the elements and the fashioning powers of a noble and godly life by studying the development and the character of the grand and saintly souls of the Old Testament age. What the wise pastor and teacher has thus found out for himself, he can then in like manner impart to others. Thus the Old Testament enables him to teach truth as life, and to present doctrines in the form of living men.

A few examples may be suggested, taken somewhat at random. If, for instance, we wish to discover and to teach what is the essential thing in all worship and service that are acceptable to God, what can better show us this than the account given us in Genesis of the bringing of their offerings to God by the two first children of the race? What a warning against all mere formalism, what a lesson in regard to the value of a clean and pure heart, in poor Cain with the wild beast of sin crouching for a spring before the door of his soul, and alas! so soon to make the fatal leap, and to drag him wounded and overcome "from the presence of the Lord." If we wish to show the folly and wrong of all mere asceticism, and to prove the humanness of all true religion, how can it better be done than by the short story of the holy Enoch living a true human life, begetting his sons and his daughters, yet walking with God, not seeing death at the last because God "took him?" Or, is it desired to show how a faith in the unseen realities of the universe can reduce to zero all the pomp and glory of their present life, and enable a man, without a murmur, to trample under his feet as worthless dross all the wealth and honor this world can offer? It were certainly worth while in this age, when we are all so mad after the material good, to be sure that such a life is possible for a human soul. We have only to study the life and character of the man who refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, and endured as seeing him who is invisible, to be convinced. If we seek to know the nature and the power of faith, and what is the relation in which it causes men to stand towards God, we find the story of Abraham, the father of the great seed of the men of faith, an answer in terms of human life to all our questions. The power of covetousness,—how it can make the plainest words of God of no

effect, how it can even destroy in the soul of man the power of a divine revelation, and trample down God-born longings and aspirations,—is most clearly revealed in the sad history of Balaam, the son of Beor, the man whose eyes were open, who knew the knowledge of the Most High, who longed to die the death of the righteous, and was slain by the sword among the enemies of God's people. The power of faith in God and love for his truth, to strengthen and fortify the soul, so that a shrinking, sensitive man, can dare single-handed to brave a nation and defy a king, and find heart to utter terrible words of threatening against his native land, while his heart still clings to it with all the ardor of a true patriot's love, stands revealed in the life and words of the saintly Jeremiah.

But why multiply examples further? These few are already more than enough to show how New Testament doctrine may be studied and taught by Old Testament life.

One thing more also is to be thought of in this connection. God, in entering into personal relations with men in human history, and in revealing the great moral and spiritual facts of the universe by his dealings with men, has ever accommodated himself more or less to the advancing receptivity of the race. Thus it not unfrequently happens that the concrete core in the Old Testament, which presents us as its spiritual lesson some abstract truth of the New Testament, shows us this truth in its more elementary, or lower, form, that is in what may be called, for want of a better term, the germ of the truth as it appears in the teaching of the New Testament. Thus the faith of Abraham, so far as it related to and secured personal blessings, even the great blessing of righteousness, rested, according to the Old Testament account, for the most part, if not altogether, on the promises of God in relation to blessings to be given to him and to the fruit of his loins in this present world. So we are taught what true faith is when it acts in the sphere of time and sense, and there is thus laid for us a basis on which to form a true conception of the nature, the power, and the results of that faith which is in Christ Jesus unto salvation and eternal life.

Since all higher truth, and all higher forms of truth, are always better understood and more correctly conceived when the lower truth, or the truth in its lower form, is rightly known, it is not very difficult to see that the Old Testament is valuable in the study of the New Testament by presenting its truths often in a more simple, as well as in a concrete form.

We are now prepared to apprehend more exactly the various ways in which the wise pastor can make the Old Testament, because

of the concrete nature of its teachings, of indispensable value to him in his work of training the church, and making it like its Lord.

(1) By presenting truth in that way which was adapted to the childhood of the race, as life rather than as formal doctrine, the Old Testament furnishes the means of instructing in sound doctrine the undeveloped souls in the church, of which, alas ! ever since Heb. v., 12-VI., 2 were written, there have been only too many.

(2) By furnishing concrete cases which are the embodiments so to speak, of the abstract teachings of the New Testament, the Old Testament makes it possible for *all* teachers and learners to have more exact and correct ideas in regard to the truths stated in the New Testament as abstract doctrines.

(3) By showing what is involved in the more elementary form of a truth, the Old Testament often affords the means of making more intelligible the grand and high form of the truth, which is presented in the New Testament.

(4) Since all men are, as a rule, more profoundly interested and moved by a concrete case than by an abstract statement, the Old Testament, when rightly used, cannot fail to add impressiveness to the teachings of the New.

What, then, must be said of the preacher who treats the Old Testament as a work of but little value to the present day, and, with perhaps the exception of a Psalm now and then, allows its treasures to lie all unused ? What else can be said than that he fails as seriously in his duty to the New Testament as in his duty to the Old ?

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## THE BOOK OF JOEL.

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### I. PERSON AND TIMES.

The name Joel, *i. e.*, whose God is Jehovah, occurs very frequently in the Old Testament Scriptures. The prophet is distinguished by the epithet "the son of Pethuel." Nothing is known of the circumstances of his life, nor of those of his father. The traditional legends respecting him have no foundation in fact. We may infer, from his writings, that he lived in the kingdom of Judah ; and that probably he prophesied in Jerusalem.

The date of his ministry is a disputed point.